T: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

312 of the grey hills, and we bivouacked with them. All
[406] through the night they kept watering their herds at the deep well-holes, and we heard the incessant creaking of the small wooden rollers in the primitive wooden bearings, with their dripping ropes, some eighty feet long.

133 A few hours' ride beyond Mayku' we entered the wide dark tableland of Bsayta, the flattened remains of what is probably the oldest mountain range in the Arabian peninsula. A few inconsiderable summits, covered with a fine film of sand, still rise from its surface, which extends for more than sixty miles—a perfectly level waste without water, without pasture, on which it seems to have hailed black gravel. At one stroke the blithe world was changed; all round us was desolation. But gloomy and eerie as Bsayta appeared at first sight, a few days in it taught me to love this waste, with all its hopeless melancholy. The solitude and stillness as of an abandoned planet broded over it. Now and then an oryx-antelope or an ostrich fled at our approach. Very rarely did we pass a shrub that was knee-high or see a green leaf or a flower. No bird sang here; even snakes and lizards
● [137] avoided this waste. Occasionally in summer, it depended
[562] on the rainfall, there grew a strange, rich crop in Bsayta —the *samh*, a low small-leaved plant, on whose twigs small berries ripen, containing reddish-brown seed granules. These the Bedouins roast and grind into a dark, bitter flour. Kneaded with sheep butter and dates, or boiled in water into a sort of porridge, it becomes edible.

726 After renewing our water supply at the Hausa well, we pushed on toward Bir Bair and into the northwestern Wadi Sirhan, the proper grazing grounds of the Beni

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IX

The Nufud

I HAD MY FIRST sight of the Nufud from the neighbourhood of the Shedad Umm-Kur. 133

And what a sight! The waves of the red desert, rising and falling evenly, seemed to extend to infinity. Crescent-shaped crests and twisted cones; a contrast of light and shade; dark red levels which rose to banks against flanks aflame with the sun. In gorges between the red walls, sixty to a hundred and sixty feet deep, a shimmer of silver and green; scattered low bushes and small trees with straight milk-white trunks and supple drooping branches bearing feathery twigs and greyish-green needles.

I held my breath, overwhelmed with amazement and admiration.

With soundless steps Maha made for the first tree, [137] stretched her slim shapely neck and nibbled with obvious delight the yellowish young shoots and the new green needles of the *ghada*—a species of tamarisk. As far as the sand dunes of the Nufud roll, the *ghada* also is found—a boon and a blessing to camel and to man. Its roots are anchored deep in the red waste of pure quartz-sand, and it disdains other desert soil.

Maha knew the Nufud. She followed the tortuous slopes which, as in a storm-tossed ocean, led from trough to crest and, past deep chasms, to the next slope. Impossible to steer a straight course, as in the Hamad or Harra.

l: Raswan T-3 (1913-35) 1947 MD4 Rwala MD4

slate-blue rocks seemed to deepen rather than to relieve its sombreness.

One morning I let Mnahi go on his shooting alone and instead attached myself to a herder. The camels in his charge were grazing a good way off and he came to camp only once every three days.

It was a stony tract, and all day long the camels roamed to and fro in search of feed among the boulders, which were sometimes as high as one's head. About noon we collected the herd and led it into the shade of some loftier rocks. There the herder and I stretched ourselves full length on the ground, and in lazy contentment, half asleep, we passed the warmest hours. But when the sky was clouded over, we had to keep on the move to avoid getting chilly, halting only shortly before the sun went down to draw milk for our supper into a wooden bowl.

The plants among the rocks were in bloom, with fragrant white, violet, and red flowers. Some of them imparted to the milk of our camels a peculiar but very delightful flavour, reminiscent of sweet sage or camomile or some aromatic herb. It had not the bitter taste of the milk produced in some regions, nor the watery, salty "variety" of the Wadi Sirhan. Even the camel-thorn bursts into bloom here at the base of the Jabal Tawil, and the stunted acacias shed a sweet fragrance. At times our small herd was powdered all over with pollen of a blue and yellow tint.

My herder companion was a bright, merry lad. Instead of sitting on his camel in normal fashion, he had the knack of sprawling for hours on end behind its hump, hanging on like a leech. I tried to imitate him,

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805 the first days of October. "Canopus has shown himself; well,
132 then, let us go into the inner desert; *ṭala'at aṣ-ṣhejl naḥarreḳ*," is now the cry of the Bedouins, who, leaving the borders of the settled and cultivated districts, wander with all their possessions into the interior of the desert in search of pastures. Canopus reigns for forty nights, after which the Pleiades, *ṭrajja*, take the helm for twenty-five nights, *ṭrâwi*, to be followed by Gemini, *ǧauza'*, for an equal period. Thus the reign of Canopus, the Pleiades, and Gemini lasts ninety days in all — three months — and this season of the year is called *aṣ-ṣferi*, corresponding approximately to October, November, and December. Next, the star Sirius, *aš-ša'era*, rules for forty nights; this season of the year is called *aš-šta'*. For fifty nights after Sirius the ruler is Arcturus, *aṣ-ṣmâḳ*, but in the middle of our April the reign of the stars ends, as then the summer, *aṣ-ṣejf*, appears, which lasts to about the beginning of June and is succeeded by the dry season, *al-ḳêẓ*, extending over four months, to about the first days of October. The Bedouin knows, therefore, five seasons of the year: *aṣ-ṣferi*, ninety nights (from the beginning of October to the beginning of January); *aš-šta'* forty nights (to about February 20), followed by a period sometimes called the second part of *aš-šta'*, ending about March 4; *aṣ-ṣmâḳ*, fifty nights (to the middle of April); *aṣ-ṣejf*, to the beginning of June, and the four months of *al-ḳêẓ*. The common Bedouin is quite ignorant of any other division of the year.

821 The rains are divided by the Bedouin into *al-waṣm*, *aš-
132 šitwi*, *aṣ-ṣmâḳ*, and *aṣ-ṣejfi*. The first includes the rains of *aṣ-ṣhejlâwi*, *aṭ-ṭrâwi*, and *al-ǧôzâwi*, i. e. the rains of Canopus, the Pleiades, and Gemini, or the *aṣ-ṣferi* or autumnal rains.
[221] As soon as Canopus appears, the Bedouins leave their camps, pitched in the valleys and the broad dried-up river beds, which
[131] are often over two hundred kilometers long. After copious rains have fallen at the heads of these valleys, the water rushes wildly through the channels, washing away the camps and drowning both the people and their herds; hence the
[245] proverb: "When Canopus rises, trust not the creek and gather dates even at night; *ilja ṭala'at aṣ-ṣhejl lâ tâmen aṣ-ṣejl waṭlammes aṭ-ṭamr bel-lejl*," because at that period the dates are ripe and no selecting is needed. The *ṣhejlâwi* rain is also called
132 *al-ḫerfi* (or *al-herfi*). If the ground is thoroughly soaked with
137 it, *arṣ maṣṣûma 'alejha-l-ḫerfi*, there soon appear on all sides

2:Musil S-4,5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

the tiny pale-green leaflets of annuals, which the Rwala call "grasses," *'ešeb*, whereas the perennials are called by them "woody plants," *šuǧar*. If the *wasm aṯ-ṯuraiyā*, the rain of the Pleiades, is likewise abundant, the grasses attain their full growth and the camels pasture on fresh *'ešeb* even before the winter, *aš-šitā'*, sets in. 132 137

The most important rain of all is the *wasm aṯ-ṯuraiyā*; it is the decisive factor for the future grazing. A copious rain of Gemini extending over wide areas assures the growth of both the grasses and the woody plants and banishes the dread of hunger. Sometimes at the end of the *ǧōzāwi* rain period comes a rain called *aṯ-ṯawejbi'* (of Aldebaran), which completes the fertility brought by the rains of Gemini, although not sufficient in itself to take their place altogether.

The *šitwi* rain, called also *an-neżżān*, will not assure a successful growth of the grasses if they have not already sprouted after the *wasm* rains. In the *smāk* and, especially, in the *ṣejf* seasons there are many very hot days, so that the grasses which came out from the ground after the *šitwi* rain grow yellow before reaching their full development. But the *šitwi* rain fills all the reservoirs with pure healthful water, which evaporates but slowly during the cold winter days and nights and in consequence remains pure for a long time. [312]

The rain of *as-smāk* is beneficial only when the soil has been thoroughly soaked by some autumnal rain, especially that of Gemini, for then both the grasses and woody plants are rapidly developed by *as-smāk* and the prosperity of the Bedouins in that particular season is well-nigh assured. Yet even the most abundant *smāk* rain is of but little account if it falls on ground already parched from lack of moisture from the preceding autumnal rains, for the hot sun of the following season, *aṣ-ṣejf*, will consume everything that the *smāk* has called to life.

An abundant *ṣejfi* rain leads to the destruction of the annuals, strengthens the perennials, and fills all the spring wells. The grasses refreshed by copious summer rain become luxuriant, quickly sending out new leaves and blossoms; but in a few days the scorching sun absorbs all their sap, withering them more prematurely than if *aṣ-ṣejfi* had not awakened them. The woody plants, on the other hand, having a longer

2:Musil S-4,5 (no date) 1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

A luxuriant growth of perennials in the autumn is a sure sign that the particular district has been visited by good *ṣejfi* rains, whence the saying: "O that lovely little gazelle! it will eat its fill of the autumn pasture after the summer rain; *jā 'ajn al-ḥējf tar'-al-ḥelfī 'eḳb eṣ-ṣejfi.*" Abundant summer rain also fills both the natural and artificial reservoirs, but such water soon swarms with frogs, *dafādi'*, and all kinds of worms, which render it foul-smelling and undrinkable in a short time.

PRAYERS FOR RAIN

If the earth does not receive abundant autumnal rain, the danger of a failure of the pasture, *maḥal* (or *muḥfi*), arises. In order to prevent it, the girls and wives of the Beduins form a procession with the *umm al-ṣejṭ*, mother of the rain (Fig. 1). A woman's gown is stretched over two sticks forming a cross and is carried by a girl (virgin) at the head of the procession, which wanders from tent to tent singing:

1. *Já-mm al-ṣejṭ ṣejṭina*
   belli bḥejt nā'ina
2. *já-mm al-ṣejṭ ṣejṭina*
   min al-maṭar eṣṭina
3. *já-mm al-ṣejṭ ṣejṭina*
   min midd allāh meddina
4. *já-mm al-ṣejṭ ṣejṭina*
   min al-wabel eṣṭina.

O mother of the rain! rain upon us;
Wet the mantle of our herdsman.
O mother of the rain! rain upon us;
With pouring rain allay our thirst.
O mother of the rain! rain upon us;
From Allāh's measure measure out to us.
O mother of the rain! rain upon us;
A real flood let our share be.

Verse 1. *Ṣejṭ* signifies a rain of at least four days' duration extending over a vast region. *Bḥejt* is a cheap gray cloak made of wool or cotton waste. 2. The girls gradually increase their prayers for rain. At first they want the rain only to wet the herdsman's mantle; then they pray for a downpour, *maṭar*,

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no rains after the *ḳejf*. in summer nor after the *ḥemâli* in winter. The wolf struggles, *ṣâred*, with the south wind and overcomes and drives away the north wind. Abu Zejd and his sweetheart 'Alja are the heroes of stories that are told among

FIG. 1—*Umm al-ṭejṭ*, mother of rain.

the settlers. They are supposed to have owned the towns now lying in ruins and to have lived in manors, the crumbling walls of which rise high above the horizon on the borders of the desert.

In every tent a gift of some kind is handed to the girls accompanying the *umm al-ṭejṭ*. Having visited all the tents in the camp, they go with their *umm al-ṭejṭ* to a small tent pitched at some distance, where they divide and eat whatever has been given them, remove the gown from the cross, and in the evening return to their tents.

PERIODS OF ABUNDANCE AND WANT

An abundant *wasm* rain, especially the rain of *aṯ-ṯrûwi* (of the Pleiades) assures to the Bedouins, as we have already said, a rich pasture of annual plants or grasses, *'eśeb*, and thus abundance, commonly called *rubî'*. In the inner desert

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In the inner desert

the word *rabî'* does not signify a season of the year; it is therefore impossible to translate it by the word spring, as we may when we are dealing with the settled and cultivated territories. The *felláḥîn*, inhabitants of the cultivated territories, enjoy the *rabî'* from year to year, and, as it always begins at the same season, the *rabî'* for them signifies the spring. The angel Ǧibrîn, who rules over the rain clouds, likes neither the Rwala territory nor the desert; therefore he spreads his wings over them, so that it rains there only in narrow strips, i. e. where the rain slides off his wings. On the contrary, when he flies over the territory of the *felláḥîn* he folds his wings as close together as possible, and then the rain falls everywhere. On his journey over the desert Ǧibrîn beats the clouds to make them fly the faster, but over the settled territory he leaves them in peace and it rains abundantly there. The teachers of the Koran in explanation of this conduct of Ǧibrîn say that he is angry with the Bedouins because they disregard the instructions which he imparted to the Prophet (Mohammed).

If the earth is not thoroughly soaked by any of the autumnal rains, then there is no *rabî'*; *al-arṣ elli má tinsa-sem má terabbe' muḥtije*. The abundance, *rabî'*, is also greater and of longer duration if the ground, after its soaking by the autumnal rain, is visited in addition by an abundant *smâk* rain. Then the whole steppe and even the desert are transformed into a delightful meadow. Every valley and piece of low ground or gentle slope, all the plains composed of fine red sand, as well as the rifts and heights are at once covered with an infinite variety of annuals and perennials. The camels nibble at the greatest dainties only and grow so fat that they can hardly move. The milk often flows or drips from the udders of the she-camels, which are full to overflowing; the mares and foals roll about in the thickest grass and the Bedouins, men, women, old people, and children, have more sweet or sour milk and camel's fat than they know what to do with. Moreover, they have the hope of a sure profit in selling the superfluous old or sterile she-camels to the 'Aḳejl buyers, who pay well for fat animals. In a territory where there is a *rabî'* tents can be seen scattered all around. With plenty of good pasture close to their tents the herdsmen do not drive their camels far out. Pure cold rain water can be found in every low-lying place, rock crevice, and hole in the river beds. Every one bathes, the clothes are washed, and parasites of all kinds

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The chaff, *ḥiśr*, which floats on the top is then thrown away, while the clean seed are spread on blankets and allowed to dry. Or the Bedouins lay the filled sacks when still moist in the sun, shake them until the seed fall to the bottom, throw away the chaff, and clean the seed once more, so that they may serve as an article of food in a poor season. This is called *semḥne* or *sebîb*.

The fertility, or abundance, *rabî'*, depends entirely on a luxuriant growth of the grasses, or annuals, not on that of the woody plants, or perennials. The latter become green even after a good *ṣejfi* rain, when the earth is well watered, *maṣ-jûfa*; but no *ṣejfi* rain can relieve the annuals, for the heat of the sun soon burns them. In the same year one tribe may have no *rabî'* at all, while another tribe, even a neighboring one, has abundance of everything. This difference is the more noticeable when the tribes are enemies. Of such a year they say: "This year has queer teeth; men live well (have something to bite into), and men die of hunger; *hâḍi-s-sene w-laha snûn nâs ja'îdûn w-nâs jemûtûn.*" The Bedouin also refers to a *rabî' al-mâ*, meaning a season when the entire growth consists of solitary grass patches insufficient to feed even the youngest camels; a *rabî' aṣ-ṣufâra*, when nothing grows except the *ṣufâra* with its yellow blossoms; a *rabî' ad-dimne*, when the grasses, though they may have sprouted and grown luxuriantly after the *wasm* and *šitwi* rains, fail to receive the *smâk* rain and become yellow as early as the end of March; a *rabî' an-naṣṣân*, when all the plains and lowlands are thickly carpeted with grass; and, finally, a *rabî' aṣ-ṣafḥa*, when not only the lowlands but all the slopes, as well, afford luxuriant pasture.

Just as the Bedouins long for the *rabî'* years, so they fear the years of want, or *ǧawe'*. If for two or three years the rains in the autumn months have not been copious enough there are no grasses and the camels must live on the woody plants alone. The winter rain, *aš-šitwi*, makes these perennials swell, but during the hot *smâk* days they dry up, become unpalatable to the camels, and thus the actual *ajjâm al-ǧawe'*, or days of want, set in, a period in which many camels perish. But if the rains of the *ṣejfi* also fail, then not a single perennial shoots up, last year's offshoots fall to pieces, to be broken and scattered by the wind, and the region soon changes into

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a dead and death-dealing desert. This is the work of the woman sun, whose sole aim is to burn and destroy.

HOT AND COLD WEATHER; DEWS; WINDS; FOGS; MIRAGES; SAND STORMS

The greatest heats, called *ḥàmm al-ḳlejbên*, occur in the season of *al-ḳêẓ*; *ḥamm as-ṣhejl*, the season immediately before the rise of Canopus, is the next hottest. When the Pleiades, *aṯ-ṯrajja*, disappear from the heavens, every stalk dries up, *ilje ṛâbat aṯ-ṯrajja kll 'ûden jibes.* 132

The season of *aṣ-ṣtà'*, with a few days before and after it, is the coldest of all; from about December 11 to January 20 is the time of the real winter, *al-marbà'anijje*. The *ṣtà'* cold is followed by the seven poisonous nights, *sabà' semm*; then come the seven bloody nights, *sabà' demm*; and finally seven nights in which the fat (of the camels) is either increasing or decreasing, *jiṣir ad-desem w-lâ jiṣir*. In explanation it should be said that the nights of the first and second week following the *marbà'anijje* are often so cold as to make the life of both human beings and animals miserable; the noses of the camels even bleed from the effects of the cold. Not until the third week, or about the middle of February, do the cold nights begin to alternate with warm ones. In the daytime the earth is warm but at night the air stratum more than one meter above the ground cools off; wherefore the two giants (i.e. the camel and the palm) suffer much from cold, *bard aṯ-ṯawîlên*. In winter, *al-marbà'anijje*, all of Palmyrena, all the territories of al-Ḥamâd, al-Wudijân, al-Ḥeǧera, al-Ḥunfa, Ḥezma', and even the Nefûd are covered with white frost, *ḥallt*. In Palmyrena, al-Ḥamâd, and al-Wudijân trees and bushes become white with hoarfrost, *ǧellâ*, at that time. Snow falls, *feleǧat aṣ-ṣlinja*, in Palmyrena, al-Ḥamâd, and Ḥesma in large flakes, *ṭuṣêṣât*, regularly every year, but as a rule it remains on the ground no more than one day, excepting in Palmyrena, where it sometimes stays longer, causing great losses to the owners of sheep and goats. [821]

The dew, *ṭall*, *wadà'*, or *ṭo'al*, is plentiful all the year round, especially during the summer months. It is sent by the moon to refresh both the annuals, or grasses, *'eṣeb*, and [821]

2:Musil S-4, 5 (no date)1928 MD4 Rwala MD4

mǧowdalât, keeping in the path trodden by camels for centuries past; it is very seldom, and then only in a level plain where the grass is fresh, that they move side by side, *mutarâdât*. Once on the pasture grounds, the she-camels graze together, *mertaʿât ḥwâlêhen*. The herdsman sits down in some higher place the better to overlook his herd, sings, carves something, or seeks edible plants and bulbs. About noon when the heat is at its highest, *ḥakmat* (or *sanḳarat* or *ḥujjalat*) *el-ḥâʿile*, the she-camels leave off grazing, kneel down, *jeṯbarreken* or *mubarrekât*, and chew their cuds till two or three o'clock. Then they rise again and graze till supper time, *jeʿaššen*, when the herdsman turns them in the direction of the camp and drives them back, reaching the tent at sunset. At that time all the youths and slaves ride out from the camp, on horseback and in small groups, *serfât*, to protect the returning herds from a possible attack. 233

When satiated the she-camels move very slowly, stopping every little while. The herdsman mounts the leading animal, *ḥaʿûda*, and rides at the head of his herd, urging it to greater speed with a short drawling song, *jeḥâjeʿ*. The ditty sung by the herdsman to keep the returning herd together is called *meḥjêʿ*. Every herdsman has a song of his own, which differs from those used by others in the words as well as in the cadences of the tone and the length of the syllables. Were it not for this singing, the camels of the same herd would never keep together, but would get lost among the thousands of animals returning home after sunset. On arriving at his tent the herdsman remains sitting on his she-camel, which he halts; he keeps on singing the *meḥjêʿ* while he waits for the whole herd to come in. Then, dismounting, he takes the cords handed to him by the host, makes each animal kneel down in the place allotted to it, *jemarreḳhen bel-mrâḳ*, fetters its left leg above the knee, *jeʿaḳḳelhen*, eats his supper, and lies down among the herd, so as to watch it at night also. Next morning before sunrise he unties the cords again, *jeṭallelhen*, and, having counted them, gives them back too the host. The milking of the she-camels is done by the owner himself or by a slave or servant. After the milking the host, or anyone bidden by him, drives them a short distance from the tent, where they graze till the dew has evaporated. [533]

The best camel pasture consists of plants called *ḥamḍ*, among which the Rwala count the followwing perennials: *arṭa*, 233 137

233 *orejabe, ḥenawa, roṛol, rimṯ, rūje, zrejje, ḥa'rān, ḥnān, ṯhamm, ṣamrān, 'ajram, 'urād, ṛaṛrāṛ, ṛaṛa', fira, fidfia, ḥuṭaf, ḥuṛḥāṛ,*
137 *ḥulūa, maḥarūt, mardaḍ, nejtāl, hejlu.*

WATERING OF CAMELS

233 As to the right time for watering the camels the pasturing ground and the season of the year are the deciding factors. When grazing on the salt *ḥamṛ* plants exclusively they can hold out no longer than four or five days without water. If their food consists of dry plants, *ṯenn*, like some dry grasses called *ḥemri* or the perennials known as *ṣafi* and *soboṭ*, they can endure from six to fifteen days. In the time of *rubī'*, when they eat nothing but fresh, juicy grasses, they will not touch water for even as long as thirty days. In the hot season, *al-ḥēṛ*, when the Bedouins encamp in the settled territories, the herds are driven to the watering places every day.

A thirsty she-camel murmurs pitiably, *taḥenn*, refuses to graze, her eyes overflow with tears, *tedāma' 'ajūnaha*, every little while she makes an attempt to urinate, and her loins sink in more and more. On seeing the camel herds in this condition the traveler inquires of the herdsmen: "How long have the camels thirsted? *ṣma' al-bel wuḍu*," the answer being: "They have thirsted four, five, seven, eight, and even fifteen days; *rib' ḥems semḥ ṯemān laḥadd ḥamsta'aš*."

The watering of camels is described by various words. *Hadad* is used when the camels leave the pasture, are watered, and return all in one day; *ḥamir*, when they reach the watering place in one day, spend the night there, and return to their pasture on the following day; *ḥurub*, when the camels going to be watered spend the first night far from their pasture, reach the water the following noon, stay there over night, approach the tents on the third day, and do not return till the fourth day from the time when they set out.

When the Bedouins move and encamp towards evening by some water they let their herds drink at night, calling this *nazelna bil-ḥemle*. If they camp far from the water, it is *menda'*; *nazelna bel-menda'*. If the camp is situated near a watering place, but with no pasture in the whole neighborhood, the herdsmen drive their animals a long distance from the camp, to which they return only when it is necessary to water them. They camp by the water, but the herds spend